

# LISTEN





# LISTEN

A Quarterly Magazine

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## THE WASHERWOMAN'S TALE.

Ewart Milne.

(O Young Lochinvar has come out of the West)

I tell of them now while they're in my head—  
*Sun up and the gloam's end, you glib-tongued river!*  
The clothes of the living and the clothes of the dead  
Are washed by the Washer of Clothes.

He was only a lad and walked with his father,  
And the sap rose green in his veins  
When he met the nun who smiled and possessed him,  
(The Ford and the Turn, the Pool and the Hurdle)

Yes, and there was more to her than a boy might fathom—  
O the corruption of that one, the subtle Byzantine!  
All the proud Jezebels of the world were in her smile—  
Yes, and guile of her the while she left her mark on him—  
Sweet Child! She played on his marrowbone for a squeezebox  
piano!

She smiled and her smile was the fork of the lightning  
And the fang of the rose, as he walked in his morning—  
*Daybreak and the gloam's end, you glib-tongued river—*

I tell of them now: to be sure he wondered  
If he could have followed her would she have left him  
At the convent gates with no backward glim,  
Or would she have beckoned and let him in secretly?

Should he curse or give thanks that his father was with him?  
Like a colt he shook and her smile possessing him!  
The floors of his world she lacquered in gold,  
And his skies were peacock over Byzantium.

Heloise he named her but I know better.  
Ha! Sister Teresa with your wine and oil,  
With your cruel subtlety and your subtle cruelty  
You took and possessed his youth in a smile

His sweet virgin youth. Then you turned and were gone.  
And gone were the floors that were lacquered in gold,  
And gone were Byzantium's peacock skies  
As he walked with his father through the streets of his morning.

I tell of him now and the nun who smiled at him  
And possessed him as never in life.  
She took his sweet youth and stroked it with fire  
Till it died in her lust's delight.

They locked him up when he sought her out!  
Here's the madhouse shirt from his poor thin back—  
And her saintly shift! White now as the snows on the gullies  
Rinse, river, the shirt of young Lochinvar, the shift of God's  
Brigid in black.

I tell of them now while they're in my head—  
*Sun up and the gloam's end, you glib-tongued river—*  
The clothes of the living and the clothes of the dead  
Are washed by the Washer of Clothes.

## THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES.

Ewart Milne.

We now, of the twentieth century, of the atom, say :  
'We have harnessed the basic power of the Universe'.  
But what Universe ? And how harnessed ?

Shall I compare the layers of the scalp to an onion.  
The onion to a vegetable solar system !  
The veins of the arm are a rivery landscape.  
And the heart is a Tree of branches with many chambers.  
See, the shape of the ventricles of the brain  
Is more intricate than the multiple wired radio set,  
And Messengers pass along it like meteors along the Milky Way.

Are we not ourselves a Universe, each in his life course ?  
Then have we forgotten the proper study of man—  
Who ranks among animals the first of the beasts—  
That the dynamo or robot calculator is more vital to us  
Than the skull and maxillary sinus !  
Learning how to fly faster than sound,  
Or how to set up the greatest chain-reaction of atomic particles,  
Do we not cut important lines of communication with our base  
Which is the Earth ?

Soaring far beyond Earth's gravitational field  
Shall we find wild melons and green figs among the cold stars,  
Grapejuice and morning dew in the dust of the interstellar spaces !

O you who have so patiently studied the ger-eagle's flight,  
Was it envy of that native of the crags in his sky element  
That made you invent, soar to out-climb him ?  
And still to be alien, still to fall back,  
Until speed, flight, energy itself, became ends in themselves,  
And from the tip of the intellect a rocket projectile grew out !

There's a world in the athlete's legs, as in the horse's,  
And between runner and winning post a universe of all time.  
But better the animal, better the centaur,  
Better running across the windy plain with no aim in sight,  
Better no winning post, than this—  
This escape by altitude from a fouled nest,  
From floors of a martyred Earth, as from floors of Hell,  
This escape that is not even escape, for see, they return,  
They return and report  
Of heaven's heights alike as of hell's domains, murmuring  
*Cold, it is very cold.*

We now, of the twentieth century, this is our task :  
To enrich human life, each life  
Inviolable,  
As the stars in their courses.



**LETTER FROM A WATERFRONT.** (for Margret)  
**Gordon Wharton.**

Now in the night's last silences  
the river's bend is lost in mist,  
and on the town shut like a fist  
the dark moon's feather balances.

And from a brothel's bed I hear  
a sailor's drunken voice complain  
that she is false and she is vain :  
*Is black the root, is blonde the hair.*

Now suddenly the night's awake  
and some fool's left the stars alight,  
so birds in blinking, drowsy flight,  
collide for that sad drunkard's sake.

*Oh Christ, I like my women hot,  
but I'll have other ones than you  
because I like them faithful too,  
so what you see is what they got.*

The timorous listener in the night  
is saddened by the boozy voice  
*And so you see I got no choice*  
—that has the maddening birds in flight

So I am sorry for the day  
the sailor left his true, blue love,  
but know wherever she may move  
that she will never move away.

At first this evening in despair  
I walked to let the evil pass,  
and now I feel I'd put it thus :  
*Is black the root, is blonde the hair.*

And though the brothel is a blot  
and not a place for heart's repair,  
and feelings collide in the drowsy air,  
*what you can see is what I got.*

**THE OLD MAN OF STARODOUB.** **Gordon Wharton.**  
for Gerald McSweeney.

A bird sat on the moon's cold shoulder  
and sang with a voice of silver and gold  
of wax flowers, cobwebs, and a broken mirror,  
and the stars turned round as the earth grew cold.

The Old Man of Starodoub lost his voice  
to the bird who swooped and tore his throat  
at Teltown where the fair was held :  
Old Man, stick of yew in a bundle of kindling.

In his house tall and dark as Rouen steeple,  
the Old Man of Starodoub wept for his voice  
and wished that his women would break the moon's bones  
with rocks from their slings when the stars turned round,

or take his eyes and hammer them to gold  
to knock the bird from his moony perch:  
and the screaming stones went from Tara to Teltown  
to raise the women with their sinewy arms.

The women came, half fire, half ice,  
and hammered two eyes into burning gold  
that flew to the bird on the edge of the moon:  
and the earth turned round and the stars grew cold.

Down fell the bird, down to the earth  
with the Old Man's eyes deep in his breast,  
and the Old Man's voice, through the wound in his throat,  
poured like silver and gold.

And that is why the Old Man sang  
from Tara to Teltown where the fair was held,  
why the wax flowers drooped and the mirrors cracked  
when silence shrieked from the moon's cold shoulder.

#### REVEILLE.

Stanley Chapman.

I found a lost stair  
That was only a dream  
And a girl at the top  
In a crown like the Queen  
Her snowstorm scratched  
My burning stars  
She screwed my eyes  
In her looking glass  
She cut off my head  
With a kiss from her mouth  
And a word made of love  
Separated us both  
An old stone cross  
Was in the word  
But the world well lost  
Left my voice unheard  
She rooted my tongue  
With the axe of her teeth  
And destroyed its song  
Like a worm a leaf  
Crossing her landscape  
Anticlockwise  
My limbs caught the chill  
Of her icy thighs  
My arms in a band  
Clasped her iron soul  
Her smile slipped between  
And I circled a hole

She baked half my heart  
In a birthday cake  
With a hundred red candles  
Like an earthquake

I sold her the mint  
And a bouquet of gold  
She said money was ashes  
My sunshine cold

I gave her a bone  
I gave her a rose  
She withered them both  
With regal grace

I presented my sex  
On a silver plate  
She shrivelled its crest  
In black nitrate  
She bent my long brush  
And mixed all my paints  
My palette was crushed

By her pencil points  
I gave her a baby  
Saying: "It's me and it's you".  
But she broke it in half

To show we were two  
I gave her the key  
That was all my pride  
She twisted the lock  
And shut me outside

My fingers were lost  
Deep down in the dream  
My tip and my toe were  
Nowhere to be seen  
She rode a red horse  
And dragged my right leg  
To a carpenter who  
Put it under her bed  
She took off the crown  
Of my long plaited hair  
And swallowed the jewels  
Of my stare

She shook down the house  
With atomic laughter  
And bombed the poems  
That I showed her  
And all she ever  
Offered me  
Was the hanging branch  
Of my gallows tree

She folded the smile  
That had counted my years  
And the leg that was left  
She threw downstairs



**TO HUGH GORDON PORTEOUS.**      **John Heath Stubbs.**

My friend with the eyes of a benevolent weretiger—  
A scholar voyaging on Abana and Pharpar,  
A poet loyal to words and his material—  
I think of you engaged now in Adam's occupation,  
And curing your own tobacco with cider or a rotten pear.  
On a winter night, a poet in China saw once  
A vision of a huge house, where all the scholars of the Empire  
Sat in the warmth of the fire, with enough rice, with poetry, and  
wine.  
But his feet stumbled among the lonely hills :  
Hoar-frost hangs on the grass-blades, wild geese pass overhead—  
Shall I ask one of the latter to carry this message ?

**TO TOM WATT.**      **John Heath Stubbs.**

Painters are diurnal, poets nocturnal, animals :  
Whoever heard that you had a Muse ?  
Following, not Phoebus, but a northward radiance,  
You, I presume, inhabit where objects are real,  
Existing in a world of light. Two dozen egg-shells  
Hang here in a basket because you like them.  
I, sleeping with ink and paper beside my bed,  
Protract my days in a semi-stupor of idleness,  
Awakening only in the yellow-lit bar  
(Where others relax)—to absorb the human gestures  
And fragments of conversation which around me themselves deploy.  
Only in the darkness, when a winter moon rides without,  
She bends and protends to me ; and only then  
Is silence a word. Companion, we'll therefore  
Modulate, in a different sense, the identical dialect.

### THANKS FOR A FIRE.

John Heath Stubbs.

Dwelling as now I do, in a frigid and northerly shire,  
For the common gift of a fire, I burn this pinch of praise :  
For the ferns and Promethean lycopods who died to capture the  
light ;  
Praise for the miner's anguish, who under unjust laws  
Groped in his mother's bowels, and brought forth the seed ;  
For the wit of lucifer struck, for science of drawscreen,  
The art of laying kindling, and the breath that wakens the spark,  
Discordant motion of particles, a type of the primal anger,  
Is now the red beast curled and tamed in my grate.  
Flap, bright phoenix, your wings, and give me kindly heat.

### A PHEASANT'S NEST.

Henry Treece.

One afternoon I dared to lift  
The straw I'd placed against the wind ;  
But she had gone, and in the hay  
The debris of her old nest lay ;  
Nine empty shells were broken there,  
And seven still whole. Upon my knee  
I took the whole eggs one by one  
And rattled them, then broke the skin ;  
Seven perfect birds, and each one dead ;  
Claw, beak and feather bunched in the shell  
Waited for woods and the keeper's tread,  
The bark of gun-dogs at his heel ;  
Seven heads lay curled, twisted at neck,  
As though they'd tried to understand  
Why nothing **hurred** above them, why  
Legs would not move, soft beak not break  
The stifling caul that folded them . . .  
Perhaps in their darkness a faint dawn  
Faded to sunset as the blood  
Slowed in their silk-thin eyelids ; then  
Did they for one small instant wonder  
Why cold should slowly come again.  
Dark places roar with silent thunder ?

## TWO VOICES.

Henry Treece.

So must we learn or die, as creatures die  
That have not learned the way to live through love ;  
The fur-warm haunch rises and falls in fern,  
Pressing in fear the brackened earth that gives  
A minute's rest between the horn and hounds :  
The salmon leaping from all bounds of earth,  
For one brief instant in a foreign element,  
Knows peace in rainbowed arch and breathes in hope  
The turf-hung gulley and the slanting sun ;  
And then the spear, the net, the wounding rock,  
The shock of falling out of light to death.  
Yet death is but one love, in other terms ;  
The love of knife for flesh, of earth for blood,  
The love of some deliverance from pain or tears  
That tears aside the veil of comfort, and  
In one sharp stroke puts all life's wrongs to right  
And makes all causes just, all madrigals,  
However contrary their parts, come home  
To stillness and a quiet heart. In death  
Is love, as deep in day is buried night :  
This must we learn or die, learn that the light  
Is but night's other face, that love and hate  
Can walk on common ground and let men live.

## ANIMAL NAMES.

Marjorie Boulton.

If we should choose analogous beasts  
By way of human definition  
The heraldry of claws or crests  
Or fur provides a useful fiction.

Already granting horns and feathers  
As flippant symbols which define,  
We can accept the meaning features  
Of cat and wolf, of bitch and swine.

What animal symbol, then, shall label  
My own essential, when I breathe  
And struggle panting on the table ?  
I am the guinea-pig of Love.

An anaesthetic would be kind.  
But Love is blind, O love is blind.



The old king died and his russet corpse  
borne by six faithful men at arms  
passed among snowladen branches  
interspersing mourners from nearby farms.

His widow watched from an upper window  
her glance resting not on the king's own son  
but on her bastard. Not on the king's son  
for he was wayward and his path not her own  
yet the bastard, his brother, might perhaps be shown . . .

In that same midwinter tide  
the old king's only son, too, died  
silently.

His body was shown while his grave was dug  
for his lips were not stained from the powerful drug.

Among medicines where thick odours swirled  
converging to combat each herb  
the queen dozed. Shadows beneath her eyes  
were hard as branches of an oak emerging  
between snowflakes fallen from winter skies.  
And in her hand an opal slowly dulled  
She heard bronze bells clash bright as the sun  
that shouts of power at its midsummer zenith.  
Bells clashed again in the patched stone tower  
for the bastard's coronation hour.

Poor fool, he nestled to his blue draped throne  
edging further in shadows that were thick and warm  
as the womb where he had known no trouble.  
In that blue velvet silence he seemed alone.

He glanced about him at his lords.  
Each man, he saw, knew his own place,  
moving with assurance moving with grace  
without a prompting word,

And he, for whom the greatest pleasure  
had been watching puppets dance an ancient measure,  
who had not dared lift his middle finger  
beckoning the crosseyed serving girl  
lest she laugh 'bastard', now saw each lord  
watch with scornful eye or scarce smothered anger  
while a blind archbishop raised his palm  
to bless him in the anointing psalm.

What oil could sanctify this wretch  
who'd been anointed with covered laughter?  
What stream for a kingdom stricken with drought  
could his bitten fingernails fetch out?  
His thoughts were borne on a beam of light  
to his mother. She'd have made him sure  
then crown and sceptre would have been more  
than mockery of his inferior height.

Nor could he turn to her for cancer gnawed the womb  
which once betrayed the king. Slow teeth ate the flesh  
that brought him forth to endless light, into a mesh  
of mockery and derision. To what now could he cling?

That year came threats of war  
yet the bastard king ignored them all  
War lords asked for audience  
but the king was away by the lakeside wall  
surrounded by dwarfs who danced for him.  
War lords brought papers and he lost them  
or fashioned them into fragile boats  
to race with the cook's lad who herded goats.

Admirals and marshals waited again  
but the king, the king was tired from sitting  
entranced with ballet. He enjoyed  
that gilded prince, whose limbs were neater  
than his dead brother's, kiss a virgin, sweeter  
than his dead mother, for she had been mild  
when he had obeyed her slightest wish  
as if he had been a little child.

Oak leaves fell and the crosseyed serving girl  
complained the gold butter each morning was hard  
and more shadows made her afraid.

Admirals and marshals now concurred  
the neighbouring country would invade  
the new gathered cornsheaves would be fired  
in each street blood and wine would swirl.

The king sat late before a dying fire  
staring in shadows where an ember showed the line  
his mother's portrait, brother's, the old king's.  
'And a blank wall waiting' he wearily sighed, 'for mine.'

At dawn he rose. By the old abbey close  
the road was misty and the lawn obscured with withered leaves.  
For this one function after coronation  
the archbishop's funeral— he dressed in the sovereign's robes.  
The old king's funeral robe was far too long :  
he slouched to his mother's room among  
hangings untouched since her death and found  
the opal brooch. He pulled the cloth across  
his aching shoulder, glanced then, growing bolder,  
at his reflection in the oval glass—  
the jewel he saw had grown most strangely dull.  
When the queen had worn it for festival dances  
it had flashed summer skies and cornbright glances  
almond blossom and april grass.

He could not pin it with his trembling finger  
so, turning, he crept down the stairway calling  
for the crosseyed girl. In childish anger  
he shouted on the stair where the east rose window  
was stained with emerald and with bright  
scarlet of morning which dazzled his sight.

And on the marble floor they found him  
wrapped in the robe of black and gold.  
The opal brooch was pinned through his throat  
where the stone seemed fire in the morning light  
though, slowly, that brilliant flood congealed  
and his blackened blood round the opal sealed.



## ROCK.

Jon Silkin.

Dan walked out one night with his mind full of rock  
And his hair full of bats and his eyes full of ghosts.  
The moon hung down from his arms and a star was  
Blazing from his forehead.  
Dan walked out one night with death in his hair.  
And stars were leaking slowly out of the sky  
And in his hand he carried the tin moon.  
That was all his light.  
And the rock stood up like genesis in his mind.  
But that was not all for death had a word for him  
And the bats had a mind for Dan and so had the ghosts.

Dan walked out of his mind one night.  
But death stayed on. And the rock stayed on too.  
To show the third star blazing from the forehead  
What an eye can see for and it stayed on again  
Just to show death what time a rock is for.

*Just to show death.*

## YOU, ANDREW MARVELL.

Robin Skelton.

You, Andrew Marvell, in the green  
obsessive light between the trees,  
knew, deafened by the drumming heart,  
the eye is grown of all it sees

and sees the blind, save in the wood,  
the soured, save in the autumn grass  
whose fruits are full to tell the tongue  
inheritance of primal bliss.

You, Andrew Marvell, where the church  
lies islanded within the field  
were blessed with Jordan to behold  
for us the Eden in the weald,

and warn our overtaken time  
deaf dumb and blind are bodies made  
that will not kneel within the grass,  
annihilate to shine and shade

ear, tongue and eye ; within the green  
pervasive light beneath the trees,  
you, Andrew Marvell, knew the soul  
is grown of all it grows of peace.

## ADMISSION ONE SHILLING.

Robin Skelton.

At the end of the avenue, the house,  
remote, affected by a disused grace,  
accepts each tourist as half recollected,  
yet leaves a mild surprise upon the air  
as if a menial coughed, or a guests stare  
at Vandyk or at Lely were intercepted.

This is disaster few can recognise,  
undramatic, shaped by its own poise :  
the terrace, carved as music, has no words :  
unstirring draperies of each stone Apollo  
fold their time who made no sign of horror :  
the sentinel elm is loud with omeneing birds :

ivy crawls the pane ; through pewter air  
soot falls dark's benediction ; unaware  
of any change, the house accepts endurance,  
lost in the unalterable poise  
of an illusion. How should we expose  
these rooms for coin, who have not their assurance.

## THE WAVES : PARTINHALL. (For Jean).

George Hartley.

It is with you I would walk  
You who leant on the edge of the wind  
Whispering your hymn of innocence.

I have divided the wind and the sea  
From the song of your love,  
For since your coming I have seen  
More of the moon than the cock on the vane.  
And speak of nights which the secret of your hand  
Has been able to preserve intact.  
Yes, and mornings when the air held you  
Translucent like a bee in amber  
Preserved in your eternity without honey.

And now the sound of the sea surge  
The restless pebbles  
And the alchemy of your song  
Mingle to my ear ;  
I hear and know no answer  
For I have blown with the winds that carry your song,  
Shared with you the embrace of wind and stinging spray,  
Fingered with you every stone perfected by the sea  
For my days have grown with you and grow with you still,  
White hands to shape my years of lunacy.  
Voice of the dumb my tongue shudders inarticulate.  
I divide the wind, I mouth a word, it breaks my lips ;  
Your dreams lost within the timeless ebb of my blood.

I showed you the sea as you had never seen it  
But dimly remembering the roar in a conch shell  
And childhood tales of Canute and da Gama.  
These cliffs where the surf runs out are ours forever.  
Now we feast on fish and have time to pick flowers.  
We share our past and future equally  
And if we soil the wind with broken promises.  
The sea will be our salvation, tide after tide,  
And the sharp rock for a seamans peril, not ours.

Sad arc of the gulls glide  
And the compulsive urge to drop from the cliff top  
Like stone to find peace in the sea surge  
Until my bones are seawrack entwined with seaweed.  
Without a sea grave my voice will lose its echo,  
My flesh parts from the hard bone  
But takes comfort from your psalming hands.  
Elemental as a child's soul  
Winds neurotic fingers may play with your hair  
And your numbering nerves count each quiver  
Of my touch.

But we cannot understand the winds allegory  
Or separate the seed from its sediment ;  
For here where the tide torments the teeth of the shore,  
My heart hovers like a bird  
High over your head and this sad waste  
Music given to the wind to break  
And echo over crumbling cliffs.  
From the laughter of your beautiful lips in anger  
To the delirium of repentance.  
You are the image of my desire.  
Let us lie low, low in the grass  
With the breathing tide for a lullaby.  
And in the morning  
The cry of the gull to wake us.



Sheer wall whose transparent  
artifice I see right  
through, and door I enter  
without opening,  
not without knocking  
into smithereens, you  
shower in my room,  
fountain that furnishes and  
falls plumb out of the blue  
ceiling's damp oasis :  
aeolian instrument,  
kaleidoscope that always  
shakes into one  
sprinkling image, cage  
that riddles the moted sun,  
and sheet of pelting rain  
that veils the entry to  
this wild cavern like  
an underwater window  
of swaying panes :  
rain-grained old movie,  
sudden sharp downpour  
falling ceaselessly on one  
place, not on another !  
Rainbow-end that I can reach,  
fata morgana of the touch,  
mirage that I lay hands on  
with fevered palms,  
you hanging bath I take  
and towel myself in till  
you run like frozen tears  
upon the air's chill  
bath of dust,  
cooling the tiled recess  
I fluff my feathers in :  
light-woven web  
continually wet with dew,  
into whose parlour coming I,  
agent and victim both,  
spy and am caught :  
O, static, moving,  
solid, diaphanous  
and draught-breathing mirror,  
you drench of crystal  
that I wander  
backwards in,  
forever stung by  
your divided hail,  
your thrashing storm

or glassy calm !  
O, heavenly maze of light,  
be always shut and open !  
Sound always, harp  
I quiver with the breath  
that builds this room :  
and that other room,  
the standing pool I trouble  
with my drowning life,  
whose death conceals  
and yet reveals  
the airy image of  
its submarine apartment.

**RAIN.**

**James Harrison.**

Rain, that all day has spattered at my window  
In peevish gusts, now hangs straight and slack ;  
Its heavy curtain drawn about the house  
Shuts out all other sound except the huge  
Prolonged hiatus of its own loud downpour.  
Night is dense with the drop, drenched in a blurred  
Incessant rush, as swiftly falling water  
Brushes the darkness and sinks almost unchecked  
On into the soil ; the very roots, like raised  
Backs of hands through woollen gloves, must feel  
Its naked thrust, and each long spear of cold  
Blunted to wet. The earth breathes in ; slowly  
The enormous lungs distend, and life must wait  
Abated, at the turning point, till dawn  
Shall utter its first whisper of delight.  
Minutes grow big as hours or days, burst  
Softly within the mind, and nerves turn outward  
Up from the sodden bone ; mere sensations,  
Lucid and exquisite awarenences, dart  
Silent, like frightened fish at muffled drumming  
Of finger tips on a bowl, about the room.  
There is nothing more to do ; already the image  
Has bribed its way into the memory  
By the forbidden corridor, and still  
The first sharp anguish of the emergent word  
Has not begun. Submissively I lie,  
Screened by the tall summer rains, knowing  
That somewhere, caved in thought, crouches the small  
Unlovely child of my strange need, and gather  
Strength that shall feed its importunity.

## A PRELUDE OF CHIMNEYS and PAVEMENT FANTASY.

The first two parts of a long poem.

W. Price Turner.

### THE BACK COURT PIPER.

Every grey day  
the erethistic fingers of King Smoke  
gloat over Govan. Every drab dawn,  
along each realm of roofs,  
the first grilled crown begins  
to wheedle its vagarian hymn  
as the void gathers its stealthy notes  
for the mass usury of lungs.  
Above the wealth of silvered slate  
light thrills the whirling dervish, glints  
on the careful aerial,  
haloes the passive hood ;  
and over the saw-toothed coronets,  
the abrupt ranks,  
the wind unravels each vaporous wing  
or vague plume dwindling ;  
from stump and stub, soot-gaitered shanks,  
a million black-rimmed minions offer thanks  
to an ancestry of flints  
for the morning match and the patient kindling,  
while far beneath these long crusted throats  
whittling crickets gossip of heresy  
by the vexed kettle on the stove,  
all dead things listening as the chimneys sing.

The chimneys sing, but the rhythm belongs  
to the rigmarole of shuttling throngs,  
scored by the traffic to the heels' attack  
in the key of the sun on a chimney stack.  
At the scuffling hub, where all shoes share  
the sham of hurry to worry's jig, I mime  
the luxury of leisure in despair  
at my feet shackled to this thoroughfare  
with a bare tenement wall at my back ;  
in a trance of craving, crucifying time,  
watching the footprint patchwork map my crime.  
Knave of Clubs, dropped from the shuffling pack.  
Word-aware, dare I uplift the vare  
on any aspect of this stream of care ?  
Lugubrious trams veer whining down the track,  
sweat-liveried vassals leap and cram, and grip :  
the dungaree varletry of grease and grime,  
each with his master's symbol at his lip—  
and a grin and wave, or a spit and swear,  
while a pavement pilgrim stoops to nip  
stubs for his pockets' trove from gutter slime  
and pats the mangled salvage at his hip.  
They bind me to them with contagious thongs :  
I am become the scavenger of songs.



## STILL LIFE.

H. W. Massingham

Bright goldfish, in their small round room  
Of water, silent in their still  
awareness of a sprig of bloom  
poised in a quiet glitter of scales,

reflecting in their steady eyes  
each glittering expression, make  
gold conversation round the spray's  
green branching tongues of bloom, its dark

calm coloured gestures offering  
no word of warning : only a still  
and silent shade of wordless green  
threading the circles of gold scales

which were our words, unspoken : features  
of goldfish sent round the centre of  
an empty room : still dumb gold gestures  
circling that green poised sprig of love.

## IN THE FIELD MY MAD WINDOW STARES.

W. A. Hodges.

In the field my mad window stares  
The ponies, shiny as jet,  
Kick up their hooves as the sky leers down  
For the boy with the rope and the swearword threat  
But the feet flashed knives as the headstall set  
And the boy's heart's blood went burning

Out over the red-splashed hedge  
Where the hawthorn blood hung dropping  
And the rose-hipped thorns strung globes of his tears  
For the sweat of his garden groaning,  
For the milk in the breasts of his virgin girl  
And the song that her womb was singing.

In the field my mad window stares,  
The gipsies, secret as clay,  
Pull up their pegs as the sky winks down  
With a dirty joke for the dunghill town,  
For the backalley poke and the spewing clown  
But the boy's heart's blood went burning.

Out over the poplar bones  
 Where the wailing wind went mourning  
 For a girl as quiet as stones  
 And the rack of his bedtime weeping  
 For the raging grief of his mounting prayer  
 When his long, white cloud came cheating.  
 In the field my mad window stares,  
 The children, crazy as rain,  
 Kick up their legs as the sky spews down  
 With a drunkard lurch for the spilling town,  
 For the churchyard joke and the preaching clown.  
 But the boy's heart's blood went burning.  
 Out over the rim of the town  
 Where the sneering sky went limping  
 The sun of his love crashed down  
 Through the wound of a virgin's taking,  
 And flamed on the crest of his boyhood's hill.  
 A glory his heart was making.

# **I WATCHED THE ONE THAT I WAS.**

**W. A. Hodges.**

I watched the one that I was grow still  
 In the crash of a squandering year,  
 And nothing I cared that a time hung chill  
 On the horns of the rocks on the trumpeting hill,  
 And the roar of my voice in my drunkard ear  
 Set half the world's nerves on edge;  
 And never a death in my storming time  
 Went gasping out on the weather's chime,  
 Though the bawling gods should rage,  
 Could call all my spendthrift hearts to mourn,  
 Or move my mind or age.

I watched the one that I was grow still  
 In the wreck of a reeling year,  
 And nothing I paid to my miser blood  
 For the hoodman blind with the crossbones stare,  
 For the brains in my box, or the coiling hair,  
 Or my mineral veins and heart,  
 But ran with the bellowing bedlam boys,  
 With a twopenny damn for the old man's eyes,  
 And the worm in the funeral cart,  
 And never a mooncalf love I gave,  
 Nor cared my prayer or art.

I watched the one that I was grow still  
In the flare of a bursting year,  
And nothing I cared for the rollicking boys,  
Or the dust-daft town with the madman noise,  
And the softwit song of the gravebell voice  
In the howling-house on the hill,  
Till Adam I saw in a raging bone  
Went plundering wide in a roaring room,  
In a flesh-white winter's chill,  
For the itch in the nerves of a roistering man,  
And the midnight horns blew shrill.

I saw the one that I was grow still  
In the milk of a mothering year,  
And nothing I cared that my blood could spell  
In the books of the wind, or the skyman's bell,  
Or the worming-time in the sexton's knell  
Was striding my life apart,  
But heard in the veins of the birthday child  
Where my spent blood leaped for a love run wild  
In the joy of a pulsing word,  
And all the tongues in the churchyard pealed,  
And fugued my name aloud.

And Adam I ran to my glory's peak,  
Where the spouts of the heavens roared,  
And praised to the making mouths of the world  
For the flowering rod in a time was furled  
In the room of a love where a life lay coiled  
Till the walls of water broke,  
And oceans I saw went surging wide  
Through the wound of my joy in a shouting tide,  
And the mouths of heaven spoke  
For the word made flesh from the echoing tomb,  
In the flame of the risen child.



## CITY AT EVENING.

Wilfred Childe.

Into the towering evening like a flower  
of burning gold the city opens up  
Her multitudinous heart and in the cup  
Of her abundant life the twilight hour

Glitters like wine; myriads of shining eyes  
Open in the tall building and she feels  
The surge and thunder of unnumbered wheels  
Throb in her streets and mount up to the skies.

All this is nothing, nothing in itself;  
Perish mechanic triumph, the skilled art  
Of cunning brains, unless this hurrying crowd

Be happy and the sordid gods of pelf  
Down to the ground before the Soul are bowed  
And beauty and pity reign in every human heart....

## JACK STRAW.

Irving Wardle.

Although I've heard you speaking with thunderous utterance  
I would have you speak always as you do now,  
you who answer me through cracked lips.

You have said statues to you have turned with wide-opening  
arms, crowds given you easy passage in the avenues, the  
pitiful militia  
cowered and done your commandings. I have believed  
your walking all night to see sun rise from a high hill,  
that women trudged the face of Europe in your tracks,  
took ship and spent themselves to be reported  
confidently to me with rough laughing and the tossing  
of your wonderful hair.

Fictional creature, although flesh and blood,  
beseeching me to take you weeping on my shoulder,  
dance now for me, now laugh, now  
speak. No; I'll not spit longer  
on this mirror: watch these ash lips whisper,  
a woman may turn with open arms  
into a smiling statue, a long awaited sun  
rise up a cold stone ball  
and blunder through the blinded skies  
my dark eyes turn on for a light  
a thousand years put out.

*The Shepherd in Virgil, becoming  
acquainted with love, did find him  
to be a native of the rocks.*

*Johnson - Letter to  
Lord Chesterfield.*

Take this in your hands: a stone  
that ruined from its burning  
to the cold earth; so severed,  
parted from its burning flesh  
that shows still a remote and swallowed fire  
lost among crowded stars. Although you hold this  
castaway limb, your eyes will never  
prey upon the original dismembered wound  
it broke from, I  
care not how kind.

Here, in this fabulous knotted cypher  
did it cool in whirlwinds, part  
twisted tree root, part, it seems,  
animal tendons, pock-marked as if  
with arrow heads: cloven its formless mass  
with this harsh flaw to the heart.

Take now more roughly into your hands  
this unearthly figure, in all its likenesses uncapturable,  
shed skin, joint of another world, that died  
out of it and has not home  
within the nature it was drawn to; take,  
I say, into your lovely hands  
and tear it in shards and jagged dust  
for the free winds again to carry,  
O magnificent animal made mad before the unknown face.

So long I've spent in hiding,  
stifling my breathing as your feet approached :  
and from the fingers of sun, seeing them  
dip in pools of brightness, splashing long shadows  
upon the dark,  
I have withdrawn when they were woven  
into your falling hair, your enquiring eyes.

I have not counted the days you searched,  
nights you slept near ; a time past, when you spoke  
or laughed aloud, while I, cursing in whispers,  
moved slyly on the balls of my feet.

My waiting was to see  
that blinding hand unclench, that sun sink  
with the sinking of your burning glances  
until oblivion was everywhere,  
not only upon me : all voices soft and constrained,  
not only my voice.

This day, since I have heard  
your hesitating footsteps pass  
beyond their previous confines  
into the tumultuous silences  
of an imagined hunt, I am  
out of love with my abandoned cell,  
with these coiled ropes and yellowing prayer books : this self,  
the rags and bones I've hoarded from you  
I have cast out to the desolate sunshine,  
rolled open the giant boulders you searched for,  
dragged them between,

and burnt,  
that your fierce pack  
may catch the scent and lead you back  
baying and savage with hunger.

*Apologia:*

Ezra Pound

**LETTER FROM AN EXILE**

**Birdie no sing in cage.**

**Can I serve you in any other way ?**

Cordially,

**E.P.**